

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and the STI Clinic

Where to go.

What to know.

STIs are more common
than you might think!

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and the STI Clinic

What is an STI?

An STI is an infection that is spread by having sex. These infections include chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, herpes, and genital warts. Most STIs can be treated very easily. However, if left untreated, many can cause problems later.

What is the difference between a sexually transmitted disease (STD) and a sexually transmitted infection (STI)?

Although the terms STD and STI are often used interchangeably, many STIs can be present without the person having symptoms (asymptomatic). Asymptomatic people can spread an STI without knowing it. A good example is chlamydia where more than 50% of people can be asymptomatic. The term STI is more accurate than STD because you may not show signs of “disease”.

Common symptoms of STIs

Although many people with an STI have few or no symptoms, some have very obvious symptoms. Symptoms that suggest you might have an STI include:

- › Unusual discharge from the vagina
- › Discharge from the penis
- › Burning feeling when urinating (peeing)
- › Sores in the genital or anal areas
- › Itching around the genital area or anus

What to expect at the STI Clinic

The STI Clinic provides confidential services on a “first come, first served” walk-in basis. Nurses and doctors who specialize in the evaluation and management of STIs work in the Clinic.

Confidential Identification Number

You will be given a Confidential Identification Number when you come to the Clinic so that no one else can get any information about you. If your STI test is positive, it has to be reported to Public Health.

Testing

The Clinic doctor and you will decide which STIs you will be checked for. To help know what STIs you are at risk for, the doctor will ask questions

about your sexual history and if you have any symptoms (such as discharge, pain, bleeding). Your visit will be about 15-30 minutes.

Men (if you choose to be tested)

- To check for gonorrhea and chlamydia, you will need to pass urine (pee) into a special bottle. Do not pass urine for 2 hours before you are tested.

Women (if you choose to be tested)

- To check for gonorrhea and chlamydia a swab of your vagina is taken. This can be done by you or by the Clinic doctor if you would prefer. If you have symptoms such as an abnormal discharge, the doctor may recommend a pelvic examination and swabs of your vagina. This is a lot like when you have your PAP smear.

Both men and women (if you choose to be tested)

- To check for syphilis, hepatitis B, or HIV, you will need to have one tube of blood drawn.
- To check for herpes, the doctor will take a swab of the blister or sore area. There is no blood test at this Clinic to see if you have ever had herpes.
- To check for warts, the doctor will just need to look at the area.

Treatment

If any of your tests is positive, we can treat you in the Clinic, free of charge. We will tell you how to take any medication we give you.

- For chlamydia or herpes, you will need to take the pills that we give you.
- For gonorrhea or syphilis, you may need a needle with medication, which we will give you. We may also use pills, which we will provide.
- For warts, we will dab on liquid nitrogen (a very cold liquid) and/or a medication called podophyllin. You will need to wash this off after a few hours.

When you leave the Clinic we will:

- Give you a card with your Confidential Identification Number and our phone number.
- Tell you when to call us for your test results.

How do I get my test results?

If you have tests done to check for STIs, you can call back in one week for your results. We will ask for your Confidential Identification Number before we give you the results.

Frequently asked questions

Q: I am a healthy person. I am not likely to get an infection or disease from sex, right?

A: Anyone can get an STI or get pregnant, especially if having unprotected sex. It is important to use a male or female condom to reduce the risk.

Q: If I am on the pill, can I still get an STI?

A: The birth control pill protects against pregnancy, not STIs. Use a male or female condom and the pill together to protect you and your partner against an STI and unwanted pregnancy.

Q: Can I get an STI the first time I have sex?

A: Yes, you can. Sex doesn't even have to be full intercourse. You can catch an STI by having oral sex or by having close genital contact with an infected partner.

If you have any questions, please ask.

We are here to help you.

Looking for more health information?

This pamphlet and all our active patient pamphlets are searchable here:

<http://bit.ly/NSHApamphlets>

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

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Please do not use perfumed products. Thank you!

Nova Scotia Health Authority

www.nshealth.ca

Prepared by: STI Clinic, QEII Halifax ©

Designed by: Nova Scotia Health Authority, Central Zone Patient Education Team

Printed by: Dalhousie University Print Centre

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The information is not intended to be and does not constitute healthcare or medical advice.

If you have any questions, please ask your healthcare provider.

WC85-1149 Updated February 2016

The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.